

Agriculture officials urge storm-season preparedness for pets, livestock, poultry

DOVER – With hurricane season about to begin, Delaware agricultural authorities are urging farmers and pet owners to plan ahead and prepare for weather emergencies. Hurricane Preparedness Week runs from May 27 to June 2.

“The time to be ready is now, before storms create disaster conditions,” said Secretary of Agriculture Ed Kee. “We have been relatively lucky in recent years, but preparedness is better than relying on luck.”

The Department of Agriculture’s Delaware Animal Response staff coordinates and directs animal emergency response and evacuation activities in the state.

“In the past, we have seen animals injured and even killed during storm situations,” said State Veterinarian Dr. Heather Hirst, whose Poultry and Animal Health Section includes the DAR program. “Buildings can collapse in high winds and trap livestock, and flooding can contaminate feed with moisture and mold.”

The Department of Agriculture recommends that animal owners take the following precautions:

Livestock and small flock owners

- Check and secure all buildings and enclosures. Repair or secure loose boards, doors, window covers, metal sheeting, wire and equipment that could blow around in high winds.
- Provide water and food. Make sure your animals have alternate water sources in case power is lost and pumps and automatic waterers are not working. Have enough food and water on hand for seven days. Move feed to higher ground to prevent mold contamination from flooding.

- Mark animals. Identifiers for returning lost animals could include ear tags with farm name and phone numbers, brands, paint markings on hooves or coats, or clipped initials in hair coats. Leg bands can be used for back yard poultry.
- Stock up on supplies. Make sure you have basic veterinary supplies on hand and that your livestock are current on vaccinations.
- Study evacuation options. If you decide to evacuate your livestock, determine several locations that the animals could be taken and map out several routes to each location. Make arrangements in advance with owners to accept your animals, and be sure to contact them before taking the animals there. Options could include private stables, race tracks, fairgrounds, equestrian centers, private farms and humane societies.
- Choose indoor sheltering or outdoor enclosed areas. If you decide to confine or shelter indoors, consider the structure strength and how it will hold up during high winds and torrential rain. If you give your animals the option of moving outside of their barn during the storm, survey your property to find the best location, do not let animals become trapped in low-lying pens, give them enough space to move around to avoid blowing debris and make sure the areas have no overhead power lines or poles.

Poultry

The Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc., recommends that commercial poultry growers take steps that include the following:

- Check your back-up generator. Make sure you have fuel for several days, and that automatic starting systems are ready to go.
- Check propane gas. Make sure you have enough gas, and arrange an early delivery if necessary.
- Check feed inventory. Arrange for an early delivery if necessary.
- Have a back-up communications plan. Make sure cell phones are fully charged in case land-line telephone service is lost.
- Think long-term. Be prepared to keep birds for longer than normal if processing plants are unable to operate. Make plans for larger-than-normal carcass disposal if necessary.

Pets

- Make a disaster kit. Just like you have a kit for your family, your pets should have waterproof kits as well. Include medical records, vaccination history and medications, current photographs, veterinarian contact information, documentation of any behavior problems, alternate contact information, first-aid kit, leashes, collars, harnesses or muzzles with identification tags, a pet carrier, food and water bowls, litter pans, toys, blankets and food and water for at least seven days, with a can opener.
- Update vaccinations. Make sure your pet is up-to-date before a storm event occurs.
- Have an evacuation plan. Delaware emergency shelters now offer housing for pets at or near human shelters. You should bring your pet disaster kit along, including food and water, and are encouraged to visit regularly and oversee day-to-day care for their pets. Owners should also have a list of other locations where they can evacuate with their pets, such as relatives, pet shelters or pet-friendly motels or hotels. Determine several routes to your local shelters before you leave.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Hurricane Preparedness Week: <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare/>

Delaware Emergency Management Agency: <http://dema.delaware.gov/>

Federal Emergency Management Agency: <http://www.fema.gov/>

Contact:

[Dan Shortridge](#)

Chief of Community Relations

Delaware Department of Agriculture

302-698-4520